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| **DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO LIBYA** | | |
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**To: *Fernando GENTILINI, Managing Director for Middle East and North Africa***

**Subject: Libya – Weekly of 27/06/2022 – Key issues**

1. **SUMMARY**
   * + - ***Entrusted with delivering a constitutional framework for elections during upcoming consultations in Geneva, the leadership of both legislative chambers can be expected to quietly obstruct the UN-sponsored initiative.***
       - ***While rival political factions pursue their own agenda, the Presidency Council (PC) appears ready to leverage its perceived neutrality to intervene in the political impasse.***
       - ***As neither the positioning of armed groups, nor the partial oil blockade have so far tilted the balance, the risk one side or another could be tempted by the use of force cannot be excluded.***
2. **ASSESSMENT**

The readiness of the Chairman of the High Council of State (HCS) and the Speaker of the House of Representatives (HoR) to meet in Geneva to further discuss remaining points of contention is consistent with the seeming delaying tactics adopted so far. Whilst on the surface, the leaders of both chambers appear willing to engage in negotiations, a consensual electoral framework is unlikely to be delivered as a result of the upcoming talks. The date also coincides with the last days in office of SASG Williams.

With the UN-sponsored consultations failing to produce a new roadmap to elections, the way out of the political stalemate remains uncertain. The political void generated by the legitimacy crisis leaves abundant room for rival factions to pursue their own agenda – all the more so now that the calendar born out of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) has expired. Ramping up their efforts to win recognition as Libya’s sole legitimate administration, both the Government of National Unity (GNU) and the Government of National Stability (GNS) are aware of the negative repercussions the resort to force would entail. Neither GNU PM Dbeibah, nor GNS PM Bashagha are willing to be portrayed as the aggressor as it could cost them the international community’s support and further alienate a population already exasperated. In addition to the lack of political progress, popular discontent could be aggravated by increasingly difficult living conditions – as illustrated by the current electricity crisis, water shortages and rising food prices.

Meanwhile, with the contending PMs both under growing pressure, the GNU and the GNS appear prepared, under certain conditions, to envisage a reshuffle of their respective cabinet. Whereas Bashagha continues to display his commitment to refrain from the use of force to enter Tripoli, he recently suggested violence could be justified in the fight against a terrorist threat – an argument used by LNA Commander Haftar when he launched his offensive on the capital in 2019. The subtle shift in rhetoric signals the GNS-HoR-LNA coalition (or parts of it) could eventually be tempted to succumb to a military solution to unseat the GNU, especially as the partial oil shutdown has so far not yielded the expected overthrow.

As for Dbeibah, his increasing vulnerability is commensurate to his dependence on armed groups demanding a financial retribution for their support. Not only could pro-GNU alliances be overturned as a result of a higher bid by the GNS, but the funding of militias hinges on Dbeibah’s access to oil revenues flowing into the Central Bank. By publicly stating he could replace Sanallah at the head of the NOC, Dbeibah is merely underlining his administration is determined to ensure control of oil revenues. It remains to be seen whether the GNU would be ready to explore a military option to remove an oil blockade jeopardizing its very survival.

**III. DETAIL**

* + - 1. After the third round of UN-facilitated talks in Cairo failed to deliver a draft constitutional framework for elections, SASG Williams invited **HCS President Meshri and HoR Speaker Saleh to meet** within ten days to reach an agreement on outstanding issues. She announced both leaders accepted to meet on 28-29 June in Geneva, *i.e.* only a couple of days before the end of her tenure in Libya.
      2. GNS PM Bashagha marked the **expiry of the calendar defined by the LPDF (22nd June)** by issuing a video statement calling on all Libyan institutions (financial, judicial and security/military) to immediately cease any interaction with GNU-affiliated authorities. Arguing his nomination by the HoR terminated the mandate of rival GNU PM Dbeibah, he claimed the end of the UN-sponsored roadmap confirms the withdrawal of the international recognition from the GNU. This claim was, however, contradicted by the spokesperson of the UNSG, who declared **the UN-defined transitional phase was set to end provided national elections are held** by then.
      3. Suggesting intensified outreach efforts, GNS PM Bashagha presented his “Roadmap to Recovery”, an eight-point pledge focusing on the holding of elections, security and economic prosperity. Bashagha’s **continuous attempts to secure foreign actors’ support** included a highly-publicized visit to London where he was invited by some members of the UK House of Commons.
      4. During a meeting of the GNU Cabinet, the Minister of Oil and Gas submitted a request to reshuffle the board of directors of the National Oil Corporation (NOC). Echoing previous episodes in a turbulent saga of public quarrels, Minister Aoun accused NOC Chairman Sanallah of concealing production figures in the midst of the **ongoing oil blockade**. Whilst GNU PM Dbeibah accepted, in principle, to review the management composition of the NOC, a subsequent statement issued by the GNU’s official spokesman stressed such decision has not been confirmed for now.
      5. **GNU Deputy MoFA Issa summoned the Egyptian Chargé d’Affaires** over the alleged ill-treatment of Libyan citizens at the land border crossing point. The convocation follows the Saudi-Egyptian joint communication expressing renewed support to decisions issued by the HoR. After the spokesman for the Egyptian MoFA depicted the accusations as an attempt by the GNU to divert attention from the expiry of its mandate, the GNU MoFA denounced the declaration as an attack on its sovereignty and national security. The latter also recalled, echoing the UN’s public stance, all parties should refrain from using the 22nd June deadline as a tool for political manipulation.
      6. On several occasions, including during this week’s meeting with the EUD, Chairman Menfi reiterated the **readiness of the PC** to leverage its widely accepted neutrality and intervene to resolve the political impasse. Addressing a number of tribal elders and dignitaries over the weekend, Menfi repeated the stance taken when he earlier met with a group of political party leaders. **Vowing to play a decisive role** should the upcoming negotiations between HoR and HCS leadership fail to deliver an electoral framework, the PC appeared once again to float the idea of issuing a presidential decree.
      7. **Military build-up** has intensified on the eve of the expiry of the UN-defined calendar. Tripoli has continued to witness extensive mobilisation of armed groups and militias, with movements of GNS-aligned forces mirrored by the gathering of pro-GNU convoys establishing themselves along potential lines of contact and strategic locations. The escalation in posturing on both sides translated into the positioning of heavy equipment (artillery, launchers, tanks) and the deployment of personnel arriving from all over Tripolitania, as well as overnight parades across the city.
      8. In the evening of 22/06, **clashes erupted** between Ghneiwas’s Stability Support Apparatus (SSA) and the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) in a central neighbourhood in Tripoli. Even though the confrontation was sparked by a local dispute, turf wars are often precipitated by the animosity opposing militias on rival sides of the political divide. The killing of four people (incl. one civilian) could fuel further tensions.
      9. In a separate event, Tajoura-based battalions erected sand barricades resulting in the closure of a busy crossroad in the vicinity. The show of force was displayed after they issued an ultimatum to the SDF to return to prison a recently released enemy commander. As rumours of the shutdown affecting the nearby airport started circulating, GNU PM Dbeibah visited the area. At first forced to abandon his mediation attempt as his presence in the area prompted the firing of gunshots, his intervention turned into a **widely commented PR stunt** when he eventually succeeded in convincing the armed actors to reopen the road. Unverified reports indicate millions of LYD were **paid off** to the Tajouran battalions.
      10. Whilst the pro-GNS camp has accused PM Dbeibah’s administration of failing to deliver basic services such as **water and power**, the GNU **spokesperson declared the oil blockade has caused gas shortages which in turn has affected the electricity grid.**

*Signed-off: José Antonio SABADELL, HoD*